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AN INDIAN DANCE AT JEMEZ, NEW MEXICO.*

BY GILBERT THOMPSON.

The visit to Jemez which furnished opportunity for the following account was made during the fall of 1874.

This pueblo is situated near the head of the valley, or about where the headwaters of the Jemez river emerge from the mesas of the Valle Grande Mountains on the one hand, and the foot-hills of the Jemez Mountains on the other. Jemez was not always here. This pueblo, as well as Zuñi, has been moved down from the mesas to the valley, near the water-courses and fields. The ruins of old Jemez are yet to be seen upon the mesa some five miles to the northward of the present pueblo. I did not visit them, and therefore content myself with this brief mention, with the further statement that it would appear that the people left their mesa-towns after the arrival of the Spaniard.

We had been informed upon our arrival that a dance was to take place the coming day, and the next morning at dawn as we lay in our blankets we heard the beat of a drum, and even at times a faint echo of singing; but neither curiosity nor professional duty as observers could draw us forth to witness the sunrise orisons. At about 10 a. m. we arrived at the pueblo, and, as they were preparing for the regular day-dance, we were received with great cordiality, and were invited to their dressing-room or green-room, as it literally was, owing to the heaps of pine boughs and other properties for personal decoration. They were a good-humored throng of men who were putting on their trappings, assisted by the women, who appeared much concerned that they should present a fine appearance. I would say that the Jemez Indian is rather larger and stronger than the other Pueblo Indians I have seen. They looked as though they were generally better fed, and, in some respects, they reminded me of the Navajo. One of the men who was preparing for the dance I remember yet as one of the handsomest men I ever saw. A very active old man was introduced to us as the chief or governor of the pueblo. After making us welcome, he

* Read before the Society, May 7, 1889.

busied himself in the preparations, and after awhile gathered the dancers together and had them rehearse the songs, stopping occasionally to repeat some phrase after him several times over until they approached perfection in those graces of expression which both excite and entrance the savage heart. We were told that they sang Tusayan (Moki) songs at their dances; that some one visited the Tusayan towns to learn these songs, and paid money for them, and, on return, taught them to his own people. Perhaps these songs may yet be traced to some barbaric Ossian or Homer.

We learned that the Jemez Indians have dances in the spring which they design as invocations that there may be plenty of rain and bountiful harvests. After the reward of their prayers and labors have been gathered in the fall, they have a series of thanksgiving dances known as corn-dances, etc. The one about to be described was the Piñon dance, and, in addition to their costume of fox-skins, buck-skins, corn, and dried fruits, they were decked with small boughs of the pine. Their head-dresses were generally made of eagle feathers, while festoons of tortoise-shells mingled with sheep-toes dangled about their persons, making a singular rattling sound as they moved. In one hand each held a dry gourd in which was corn or pebbles. Their costuming being now nearly complete, we went to the open space or court at the northern part of the town where the dance was to take place. In the center of the court were set two piñon trees, each about ten feet high and some sixty or seventy feet apart, and the line of the trees was east and west, or parallel with the longest side of the court. The doors of the one-story adobe houses opened upon the court, and on the roofs were a number of large modern cages containing eagles, whose feathers serve decorative purposes during the dances.

The procession of the dancers, numbering about thirty young men, now entered with measured step and dignified manner, preceded or guided by a leader who was costumed in an appropriate manner, but not so elaborately as the dancers. They were accompanied by three musicians, who, as I recollect, were not dressed for the occasion. When the dancing was to begin, the musicians sat down upon the ground. Before two of them were placed large gourds, portions of which had been cut away. In the left hand each held a round stick firmly pressed across the open top of the gourd, and across these each drew a notched stick. The instrument is simply a very primitive form of a fiddle, the hollow gourd acting

as the sounding-board, the stick across it answering to the strings of the modern instrument, and the notched stick being the bow. The sound produced was like that made by a "devil's fiddle," but their capacity to produce noise is beyond belief. The principal musician had an instrument of percussion, made by folding a large well-dried hide in such a way that the edges were all inside, the ends being tied by thongs of raw-hide. It thus made a flat bundle about three feet long, a foot and a half wide, and eight inches thick. This was laid flat upon the ground, and was pounded with a club some three feet long with all the force and regularity of a trip-hammer, at the rate of nearly one hundred strokes to the minute. This was the rude drum we had heard three miles away at sunrise.

The dancing was monotonous, and consisted only of stamping the ground with the right foot, accompanying the movement by occasionally shaking the gourds. The dancing and singing was in perfect unison with the accompaniment of the musicians. The dancers kept well dressed in line, and faced to the four quarters as required by the nature of their song, which appeared to me only an endless repetition of unmeaning syllables. This was uttered in unison with full force of the lungs. The melody was neither intoning nor chanting, and in part was in a minor key. The range required was limited in extent, their voices harmonized well, and the tone was robust and full, and in about what would be called a high baritone register. It was good, manly singing, and here let me state that to any one with a quick ear for gradations in musical tones, and with the happy faculty of recording them, I consider that a delightful field of research is open in placing on record the music of the Pueblo Indians, and it will be found that the music is of considerable variety, and that each song has its appropriate melody.

After dancing in the manner described for some fifteen minutes, they marched away in the order they came to some place for refreshment and rest. Just before the dancers left, however, two Indians appeared on the roofs of the houses at the north end of the court. They had hardly any clothing upon them, and what they had was simply rags. Their bodies were smeared with black, their cheeks were whitened, and their ribs and breast bones outlined in white, their general appearance resembling an animated death's head and cross-bones on a black background. Their coming was so sudden and their make-up so extraordinary that their appearance

was really dramatic and startling to me. The two went through a pantomime as though each was afraid to speak, when one of them advanced to the ladder as if to descend, and then ran back as though afraid. Mustering courage at last, he called to the people in the inclosure in the intoning manner peculiar to these Indians and the Navajo when calling to each other at a distance. As nearly as I could learn, the substance of their whole by-play was this: they were very poor, they had no sheep, no horses, no blankets; they were miserable in the summer, and more miserable in the winter; they had heard of the great Jemez people, how rich they were, how much they had to eat, how fat they were; and they had taken courage to come and see the great Jemez, but they were so poor they were afraid to come down among them; would the rich Jemez let them see the dance and give them a mouthful to eat?

This speech was so effective that I could but take it in all seriousness in spite of the hearty laughing and jesting of the Indians around me, and who, as part of the play, at last consented that these "two miseries" should come among them and get something to keep them from immediate starvation. They quickly came down the ladders and began begging right and left, creating uproarious laughter wherever they went. One of them begged something to eat of one of the women, and she sang a short song in reply, accompanied by a shuffling, dancing step, after which she gave him a bowl of some kind of food seasoned to redness with peppers. Some tobacco I had proved a most acceptable present.

The dancers now reappeared, and the musicians sawed and thumped as vigorously as ever. One of the board of commissioners of the town, I suppose, then invited us to a pleasant spot in a vineyard, and there we sat down underneath a trellis of vines and were given melons and grapes to eat. In return we furnished the inevitable cigarette, and truly it was a delightful interlude. Our hosts were kindly and gracious, and great was our pleasure to learn that an old man among them was no other than Hosta, who was governor of Jemez and the guide of Lieut. James H. Simpson through this section in 1849. The portrait of Hosta (the lightning) in full dress is given in Simpson's report published in 1850. The old chief, like all old men, mourned sincerely the decadence of the times and the great Jemez people. He repeated the old tradition current among them that a white people would come from the south and

nearly destroy them, but another white people would come from the east and treat them kindly and make them happy.

We returned to the court or plaza, and our two beggars were found mounted upon fine horses with beautiful blankets in abundance. One of them skook me cordially by the hand, showing the tobacco I had given him, and I was surprised to recognize the governor of Jemez.

We returned to our camp, and, as the last lingering ray of the sun left the Valley of Jemez, so expired the last note of the song of the dancers.

JAPANESE SACRED FIRE-DRILL.—The continuation of the use of the wooden fire apparatus in Japan is a very interesting survival. My attention was called to an article describing a fire-drill preserved in the Tokio Museum,* giving, however, no statement of its present use in Japan. On inquiring of Mr. R. Hitchcock, who has just returned from Japan, he kindly gave me the following notes :

“There seems to be an idea of sacred fire in Japanese mythology, but it is nowhere very clearly expressed. The Fire-god myth seems not to have developed well in the Japanese system. The Fire-god was at one time ruler of the under world, or land of gloom, where the spirits of the dead all go. He was a dangerous sort of deity and, lest he should do harm to the world, the gods of clay and water were created to restrain him. Nevertheless, sacred fire is mentioned in several places, in such a manner as to imply that it at some past time was a symbol of purity. There is a hall of sacred fire at the Ise shrines, but I have been unable to learn anything concerning it.

The Idzumo fire-drill, of which I send you two photographs, is found at the temple known as O-yashiro. These photographs were taken at my request by the Rev. Henry Evington, of Osaka, who also very kindly obtained for me and translated the traditions concerning it as given by the priest of the temple.

The apparatus is called *hikiri-usu*, the mill for cutting fire. The drill is called *hikiri-kine*, the stick or rod for cutting fire. The board is made of the wood *hinoki*, the drill of *Utsugi*, *Deutzia scabra*. The dimensions are as follows :

* Trans. Asiat. Soc. Japan, vi., part III, 1878, p 223.

The board is 3 feet 1 inch long, 4 inches wide, and 1 inch thick. The drill is 3 feet long and four-tenths of an inch thick.

When O-kuni-Nushi yielded up the government of Japan to the ancestors of the Mikado he made a condition that a temple should be built for him in Idzumo, where he might be worshipped. This was the origin of O-yashiro, and O-kuni-Nushi is the deity of the shrine. Kuchiya-Tama was ordered to prepare food for the god, and he made the fire-drill and produced fire by friction. This is the origin of its use at this temple. The fire-drill here described was made with stalks of sea-weed (*me*) for the board, and *komo*, probably *Halochloa macrantha*, for a drill.

The second son of the Sun-goddess became priest of the temple, and he received from the younger brother of Amaterasu, Kuma-no-Kushi-Mikami, this fire-drill. He cooked food with the divine fire from generation to generation, esteeming it pure and holy. Hence the ceremony of producing this divine fire was performed at the Kumanono Yashiro, in Idzumo, where that God dwells. Later it was also performed in Kâmi-dani Yashiro.

Minamoto Yoritomo mentions in one of his writings the source of fire. Fire first came from this Kumano no Yashiro; hence the temple is also known as Nippon no Hide some jiusha, the shrine whence Japanese fire issued.

The fire-drill is used at the festivals of the O-yashiro to produce fire for use in cooking the food offered to the gods. Until the temple was examined officially, in 1872, the head priest used it for preparing his own private meals at all times. Since then it has been used only at festivals and in the head priest's house on the eve of festivals, when he purifies himself for their celebration in the Imbidono, or room for preparing holy fire, where he makes the fire and prepares the food."

The Ainos also still practice the art of fire-making by gyration of one piece of wood upon another, when other quicker means are not at hand. The Japanese sacred drill described was worked by twirling a cylindrical stick between the palms of the hands, pressing it down into a cavity in another stick. Japanese carpenters' awls and drills are used in this way; this seems to be the simplest form of drilling tool.

WALTER HOUGH.